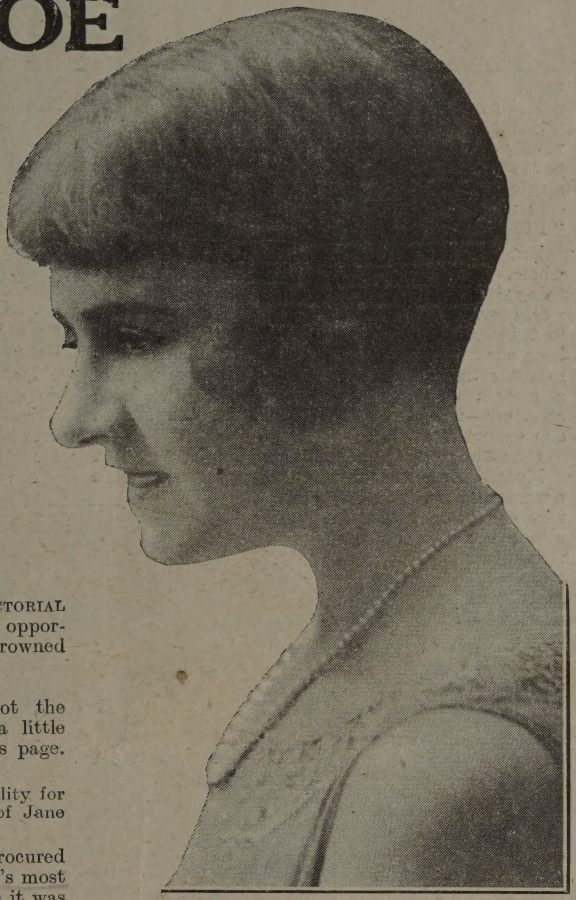
UWT/D/4/6

JANE DOE

ANSWERS

MUSSOLINI.



Last week, Mussolini, the Italian Dictator, gave his views on Women in general. They were characteristically striking, and I asked Miss Jane Doe to reply to his stern edicts regarding women's dress and compulsory marriage. Her reply, printed below, is equally characteristic, but none the less forceful, and forms one of the most striking replies from one public person to another ever penned.—YOUR EDITOR.

I OUGHT to thank the Editor of the PICTORIAL WEEKLY for giving me this, my first opportunity of jumping on one of these Uncrowned Heads of Europe.

You know what I mean.

And if he were wise (the Editor, not the Uncrowned Head), he would have had a little red-inked notice printed at the top of this page. Like this :

The Management can accept no responsibility for any accident arising out of the execution of Jane Doe's duty.

Now, if the intrepid interviewer who procured last week's chat (some chat) with the world's most dictatorial Dictator, had come to me before it was published, saying, "I want you to shut your eyes and open your ears while I read you a few home truths about woman, afterwards you will be allowed three guesses at the identity of the person who uttered them," my ears would have flapped like anything.

I know what home truths are. Always so richly insulting.

And my answer, pat as pat, would be : "Sir, don't make me laugh ! I've got my best lip-stick on. This is too easy. Set me something harder. Anyway, my three guesses are :

"No. 1. Any village idiot. Preferably one who fancies himself to be a reincarnation of the late Mr. Napoleon Bonaparte.

"No. 2. One of these alleged spirit messages from the Beyond, purporting to come from a small town councillor who was flourishing about the year 1837.

"No. 3. One of these catty female centenarians who, when asked by some fool reporter to what she attributes her ripe old age in the same breath as he wants to know what she thinks of the Modern Girl, replies : 'I owe my great years to a pea-green jealousy of anyone younger, prettier, and fresher than myself. In short, the Modern Girl.

"'Hatred of her has kept me alive and kicking.'"

By the time the fatal words, "It's Signor Benito Mussolini !" had faded away in pained silence, you would have been able to knock me down with a tuppeny picture postcard of Venice by Moonlight.

Of course, I knew the Duce had his own ideas about how the world should wag, and, reading between the lines of some of his public announcements, I should say his only private grief was that he wasn't born or thought of prior to the Year One, so that he could have put in a few useful and timely hints on the creation of mankind.

And the very deuce of a deal (you must excuse me, but I can't help it) would womankind have got out of it, if he had had his way. But I pay him the compliment of never dreaming he had 'em as bad as all that.

Here's the very words, straight from the Duce's mouth :

"You have women competing with men and trying to surpass those whom she used to look up to with awe and respect."

Well, I must say I've never noticed it. If I know anything about women, and what is more to the point, anything about men, I should imagine

there's not a woman breathing who, in her secret heart of hearts—to use a good old cliche—looks upon the male sex with awe and respect.

Not even an Italian woman.

She may pretend she does, for such is the peculiar vanity of some poor undeveloped gentlemen that you can only deal with them after a copious application of soft soap. Awe and respect in this case merely represent another way of remarking: "I took the shortest cut to get what I wanted."

But don't you love the idea of woman, on the whole, looking with awe and respect upon something they themselves have brought forth into the world from time immemorial? We wiped its first tears. We wiped its dirty nose. We took it on our knees, face downwards, to enable us to administer those hearty corrective thumpings upon a certain quite estimable portion of the male anatomy—where, however, not even the Italian sun expects to shine.

It makes me laugh; but it's no laughing matter.

Mussolini's a dangerous character, because he's a woman-hater. You can prove this easily enough when you remember that vulgar piece of gratuitous cheek which goes:

"Women exist in this world for men, and the sex cannot imagine a more terrible hell than a world that possessed no males, for then their whole interest in life would be gone."

No sane man who likes and admires my sex could talk in this way of just one half of the human race. It's the tone of the common and not too clean-minded male who despises as he secretly covets women.

When I hear a man say he despises women I know that his life contains the history of some despicable behaviour on his part towards woman or women.

And you may bet your sweet life that the man in power who hates womankind will be doing his best to keep womankind in the background.

Mussolini's at this moment trying it on the Italian women.

"I have managed to keep woman in her place. I have decreed that she shall concern herself only with the duties of home and motherhood."

That's all right, as far as it goes. Every normal man and woman longs for parenthood. But will every normal man and woman in Italy long for parenthood after hearing their Dictator lay down the law about it? "*Women must marry, and they must have children, and they must bring up those children in the way that I have indicated.*"

Signor Benito *Mustolini*, indeed.

Would Mussolini allow this? A woman Town Crier competing against men in a recent competition to decide who had the loudest voice.

I suppose he isn't prepared for the astonishing fact that there are plenty of people who, through no fault of their own, are not fit for parenthood? Not every woman is a born mother, nor every man a born father. This is probably just as true of certain people in Italy as in any other country under the sun. What is he going to do about that?

Some of the most awful human tragedies I know are those who started life as unwanted and unliked children.

To achieve this ghastly idea of making parenthood an industry, and not a privilege, as it ought to be, he talks big and large about the bachelors and spinsters "whose celibacy is at once a menace to the eugenic situation in Italy."

I should also like to know what he's going to do about this. I believe a tax on bachelors is already in existence. Somebody ought to inquire into it, and tell us how it works.

Rottenly, I hope.

A woman is a human being before she's a lover, a wife, or a mother. She has a right to her own life. She has a right to say whether and when she will be a lover, wife, or mother.

Even in Italy.

And if Mussolini had any sense he would know very well that you can't "keep woman in her place," as he so chivalrously puts it. The country that has its iron heel on the neck of its women never prospers. All the most progressive countries have progressive women.

How can he presume to tell the woman of the 20th century what she must and must not do? How dare he fire off that stale, insufferable rubbish about the amount of face powder and lipstick he's going to allow her to purchase, and the skirts she shall wear? How can he have the face to say she apes man when she takes her place beside him at his job or his task of ruling a nation?

He's not only a fool to think it, he's dotty.

You can't keep bright women down.

Servant women (and it seems to me that Mussolini is out to encourage a breed of servant wives and servant mothers) are ignorant women. Ignorant women make ignorant, foolish wives. Ignorant: foolish mothers make ignorant, dangerous children.

The freer the mother the freer the child. Free women keep free men up to the mental and social mark.

If you've knocked about the world, you'll always find that the most bumptious men come of a race that has cowed women.

Of this, Signor Benito Mussolini is a shining example.

Should We Have Domestic Courts? By a Barrister-at-law, in Our Next Issue.